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L E T T E R

To the REVEREND

Mr. *Simon Browne*,

In Vindication of the RIGHT of the
People to Satisfaction concerning the
FAITH of their Minister.

In Answer to his REMARKS published in
a Letter to the Reverend Mr. *Thomas
Reynolds*, on the Conduct of the Society
late under the Pastoral Care of the Reve-
rend Mr. *Samuel Pomsfret*.

By a Member of that Congregation.

With a large POSTSCRIPT in Answer to the
Postscript, and Additions of the Second Edi-
tion of his Letter.

Search the Scriptures, John v. 39.

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A
LETTER

To the Reverend

Mr. Simon Brown

In Vision of the Right of the
People to Satisfaction concerning the
Facts of their Mission.

In Answer to the Remarks published in
a Letter to the Editor of the
Review, on the subject of the
Mission of the Society.



By a Member of the Congregation.

With a large Postscript in Answer to the
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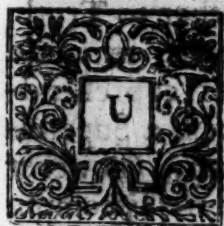
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A
LETTER
To the REVEREND
Mr. *Simon Browne, &c.*

REVEREND SIR,



UPON perusal of your Letter to the Reverend Mr. *Reynolds*, on Occasion of his Funeral Sermon, for the late Reverend Mr. *Pomfret*, and his Preface to it: I could not avoid reflecting on an Observation frequently made, that Men of distinguished Capacity, are sometimes permitted to fall into some act of Folly, to their Humbling and Reproach.

WHATEVER Satisfaction the Enemies of our common Christianity may take, in the many Wounds, which our late unhappy Controversies, and the angry Method, in which they have been generally managed, have given to the *few Remains of practical Piety*; methinks every serious Person cannot but be affected, with a sensible Disquietude, and heartily wish to see those Flames expire, which Pride, and Prejudice have kindled, and have been too too long by learned Men maintained,

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How conclusive soever your Reasonings with Mr. *Reynolds* may be, they lose their Force, and languish when introduced in the unjustifiable Method you have taken in your Letter to him. The Laity cannot help conceiving Prejudice against an Author (however distinguish'd his public Character is) that appears to design chiefly personal Reflections, as I think is manifest you have done, in an insulting and unguarded Manner. Thro' the greatest part of your Letter, you appear uncloath'd of your Character, as a Minister of Christ, and seat your self in the Scorners' Chair.

THE Method of Reproach which you seem to take Pleasure in, is not possibly defensible, as it refers the Character to be fill'd up, with all the Circumstances of Vileness, which an ill-natur'd Reader can suggest.

To what good Purpose are your many Insinuations reflecting on Mr. *Reynolds*, or what real Service can they be suppos'd to do, either to Truth, or Peace? Had Love, and Benevolence, temper'd your Debate, making allowances for apprehended Mistakes, instead of appearing with a Supercilious Air of Infallibility and Contempt, (however disguised) your Conduct had been more becoming the Gentleman, and the Christian.

No Vindication of an Article of Faith, even of the greatest Importance can justify a Violation of Christian Temper, or Practice, much less a difference of Opinion about the proper Methods of securing it. If Authority was asserted in a late Case, to which all were requir'd to submit, I know nothing of it; I am sure no such Submission either could, or ought to be enforced. Every Man is undoubtedly to judge for himself, and has Direction of his own Actions (having made impartial Search) in that Way he shall judge most acceptable to God, and conducive to the interest of Religion.

IF, as you tell us, *Page 6.* the Reason of your Animadversions; on the Commendations, which Mr. Reynolds has been pleas'd to give of the Conduct of the Society, late under the Pastoral Care of the Reverend Mr. Pomfret is, that *he has made That an Handle for censuring and reproaching his Brethren*, and on that Account is blame worthy. Are not you, Sir, by the same Rule self-condemn'd, in tacking the Censures and Reproaches of your Brother, to your own Remarks on their Conduct? Unless you claim the sole Right to throw about your Scandals without Controul.

I SHOULD not have attempted to appear in this publick Manner (it being out of my Province) were I not pressingly importun'd by my Brethren, who think themselves very ill treated, to essay a Vindication of their Rights, and the Right of every Christian Society, to desire and endeavour Satisfaction concerning the Faith of their Minister.

I AM a Member of that Church where the Reverend Mr. Denham is now Pastor; I was particularly instrumental in procuring his Settlement among us; I was active in all the Steps taken: I know what Demands were made, and by whom, as well as what Mr. Denham's Compliance was; and hope to vindicate our Actings, as agreeable to our natural and inherent Rights, and to justify our Conduct both as *Prudent and Christian*.

THE Character of the late Reverend and Pious Mr. Pomfret, is too well established to need any Vindication in this Letter, and his Memory will be precious to Thousands, in spite of all the mean and pitiful Remarks you have made to depreciate it. You are pleas'd to take notice of Mr. Reynolds's mentioning one Expression, which gives you great Offence, That he *pronounc'd his Brethren left of God* (referring to the Dispute at *Salter's-Hall*)

and quote it, as if intended, in an absolute Sense, which common Candour would soften, and determine, as it really was, viz. That in his Opinion, in that particular Case, they were left to the guidance of their own Spirit.

WAS not Mr. Reynolds collecting Memoirs of his Life? And was it a Crime in him to relate a Matter of Fact without any Comment of his own? If the Part you acted in that Assembly, savour'd of the same Spirit your Letter is full of, how far you were left of God, I refer to the Judgment of the serious part of Mankind.

YOU might have omitted the Sneer, without losing any of the Beauty or Ornaments of your Letter, when you ask'd Mr. Reynolds *whether he thought this fine Saying was utter'd under Inspiration*.

FINE Sayings, Sir, he left to such polite Genius's as yours. I should greatly rejoice, if by all your *fine Sayings* it was evident, that you have as many Seals to your Ministry as he had.

HIS serious Spirit, Sir, ought not to be bantred, though his fervent Zeal might happen to lead him into some Indiscretions.

NOR did his other Sayings; that *if he had a Thousand Hands, he would Subscribe with them all*, need your learned Explication, the meanest Reader would have understood it, as well without, as with your *Fine Comment*.

BUT I am apt to think the worthy Mr. Pomfret's Memory, had escaped the Lash of your Pen, had it not been for the Pleasure you take in abusing Mr. Reynolds.

I AGREE with you that, *It is not the Saying of a Man on either Side, be he wise or weak, that must determine what is right, but the Merits of the Cause*. And therefore I hope, that the World will not give into the Reasonings of Mr. Browne, on the heap of Suppositions, which the former part of his Letter is stuff with, nor conclude from thence, that
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the Conduct of the Society is *Unjustifiable or Impertinent*, until the Cause is heard.

HAVE you not told the World, Sir, P. 7. That Mr. Reynolds *has not thought fit particularly to communicate the particular Way and Manner, wherein this People thought necessary to bring their present Minister to the Test.*

HAVE you not amus'd the Reader then with a jumble of Facts, with as much Assurance and Triumph, as if you knew the whole Transaction, with all the Circumstances of the Society that made their Conduct prudent?

HAD you not given Mr. Reynolds's Account, a Construction agreeable to your own Scheme, there had been no such glorious Opportunity of proclaiming your own deeper Judgment, or reflecting on his Veracity. How far Mr. Reynolds's Relation is Fact, and how wild your Chimera's are, will best appear, when I come to consider, and state the particular Method, the Society threw their Management into, with the Reasons that determined them so to do.

THE Method in which the Society proceeded, and which I am still of Opinion was both *Prudent and Christian*, in order to secure a *Regular and Sound Ministry*, is in Mr. Reynolds's Preface, Page 2. thus related " Seeking God together in a Solemn
" Manner, taking reasonable Time to consult, and advise with one another, informing themselves, as far
" as they had Opportunity, of the Character, and Principles, of those they had an Eye upon, agreeing, that
" whosoever they should entrust the Care of their Souls withal, He should give them Satisfaction concerning
" his own Faith, in that Way and Manner, which under the present Circumstances of our Times, they
" thought fit, and necessary to desire.

IN this Passage Mr. Reynolds is acting the Part of an Historian, and has represented *naked Fact*.

ON the Death of Mr. *Pomfret* the Society frequently met, and consulted, and came to the Resolution mentioned, wherein I apprehend, and hope to demonstrate, they acted agreeably to their Rights, *both as Men, and Christians*, and that what they did, under their particular Circumstances, was *Prudent and Christian*.

IF an Enquiry into the Character of a Minister is not one prudential Method of procuring, and of securing, a *Regular Ministry*, I am at a loss to understand your Meaning of the Terms *Proper*, and *Regular Ministry*. It is indeed possible, that after all the Care is taken in this Method, a particular Society (for concerning such is the present Debate) may settle in what you call a Lay-Brother. But should this be the accidental Event, it cannot be said to arise from any Impropriety in the Method, unless it shall stand charged with an evident Tendency to such a Result which, I believe, you will not be so absurd, as to assert. It must then be occasioned either by a too negligent, and superficial Enquiry, or (what we have no Concern in) from a Notion entertained by the Society, that a Lay-Brother may regularly be called to the Ministry. And some such Societies, you know there are professing Christianity. It therefore does not follow, that because such a Settlement may possibly happen, the Method spoken of is not *Prudent* nor *Proper*.

I HOPE you will admit that Mr. *Denham* is regularly called to the Ministry, otherwise, I believe, you must disown your own Regularity, which I will not suppose you willing to do; and yet this Method the Society proceeded in, and it hath issued in a very Comfortable, and *Regular Settlement*.

I DO presume by *Regularity*, you mean the same thing with the Society, and I am sure, I speak their Sentiments, as well as my own, when I say,
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it consists in these Things, *viz.* That the Person have a liberal Education in that Way, and in such Sciences, as qualify for the Ministerial Office. That he be Regularly ordained, *I mean*, by the Imposition of Hands by Presbyters. That his Life, and Conversation, upon strict Enquiry, be found becoming the Office. These things I judge, *Proper*, and in the Case before us have been searched into. Surely the Character to be enquired after, respects the Person concerning whom the Enquiry is made, both as a Minister, and a Christian, unless you think a Minister, as such, is a Person of no Character.

You have not indulged us with a Display of your own Sentiments, with respect to a *Regular Ministry*, and informed us, whether any, or what part of the Character was to be enquired after. You might perhaps furnish us out of your redundant Wisdom, with a Catalogue of other Methods, that might be hereafter a Guide to the Churches: Though we have hap'ned to center to our entire Satisfaction, without such additional Knowledge. Nor does Mr. *Reynolds* assert this to be the only *Proper one*, but in general, that this among others may be called *Proper* too.

PAGE 7. you proceed to make some Remarks, on the *Prudent and Christian Methods* taken to secure a sound Ministry among us, *viz.* They sought God together in a solemn Manner, they have taken reasonable Time to consult, and advise with one another; and they have informed themselves, as they had Opportunity of the Character and Principles of those, they had their Eye upon. Thus far you see nothing imprudent, nor unchristian, that is to secure a sound Ministry, and I will add a *Regular* one too.

How happy is it that Mr. *Browne* will think so silly a People, acted in any Instance either *Christian*, or *Prudent*.

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IN the Name of that People I would return you Thanks for your Testimony. We cannot but very much value your judgment, as, your sanction to any of our Actings will doubtless pass *Master*, where Mr. Reynolds may fail, and justify the Propriety of our Conduct.

THUS far, at least, *the Game is play'd into your own Hands*. You have taken the venerable Character of one of our *Triers*. What a Reputation will your Testimony give us! What a bright Figure will this Part of our Conduct appear in, now you like and approve it, and carry your Name, and Honour as well as ours, to the very tip of the tail of Time! Thus far, I hope, you will as well as Mr. Reynolds recommend the Example, as worthy of Imitation; for every Man, you know, will what he likes, and is conformable to his own Sentiments. No doubt, they will always act as wise Men, and good Christians, who act, as you think fit to direct and appoint.

You go on in the same Page with your Remarks, *viz.*

THEY also agreed, that whosoever had the Care of their Souls entrusted with him, should give them Satisfaction concerning his own Faith, in that Way, and Manner, which under the present Circumstances of our Times, they thought fit and necessary to desire. In this Part of their Conduct (good Man!) you are not clear that it was either Prudent or Christian.

THIS, Sir, is the grand Question, which is the primary Intention of this Letter to debate with you, and endeavour to vindicate.

WHETHER a particular Society of Christians have a Right to desire Satisfaction concerning their Minister's Faith, in that Way and Manner, which under the present Circumstances of our Times, they think fit and necessary; and whether if such Satisfaction be desired, the Society herein acts imprudently and unchristianly: I shall,

FIRST,

FIRST, endeavour to settle this Right, and then vindicate the Society in their Method of acting in that particular Way in which they desired Satisfaction.

BUT, before I proceed, I think it necessary to observe, (because it may give some Light into the Affair) that you omitted in the Quotation from Mr. Reynolds, *under the present Circumstances of our Times*. Had you mentioned this Passage, it might have spoiled the Glory of your Design and Insult. We of the Society think those Words very material. We know that some Ministers have embrac'd the *Arian* Scheme; and whatever your Notions may be concerning it, that Society would never consent to have such a one knowingly for their Pastor. And 'tis hoped, you will permit them to judge for themselves, at least, until you condescend to inform them, by whose Judgment they are necessarily obliged to regulate both their Faith and Conduct.

WHAT a glorious thing was Liberty, and judging for ourselves, when the Affair of *Salters's-Hall* was in Agitation! How warmly has it been defended from the Principles of Christian Liberty! But now the Scene is shifted, and the real Design unfolded, and we poor Laity are told, that we have no Right to enquire into the Faith of our Ministers; *It is Imprudent and Unchristian*.

THIS, I presume, is a dangerous Innovation, and a notorious Violation of the Rights, and Dignity of the Ministerial Office. But will not such a Scheme embellish the Catalogue of the Reasons for the Contempt of the Clergy?

It signifies very little, Sir, to exclaim against Councils and Synods, and to expose the Absurdity of submitting to their fallible Decisions, and at the same time run into another Extream, equally destructive to the Rights of Mankind, by claiming in its Consequence an Independent Power; let
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your Dictator's Chair be at *Rome*, or *London*, it's not of any Consequence to the Christian People, with respect to their natural inherent Rights, if they must submit.

THE Question then to be discusst, is not whether a Society of Christians have a Right to oblige a Minister to believe any certain Articles of Faith, which they shall be of Opinion are naturally deducible from the Word of God, and a Part of Divine Revelation, or to form a *Creed* to which they would Authoritatively require the Minister's Consent. No, Sir, we pretend no such Power, and should think it would be an invading the Authority of our Lord Redeemer, and inconsistent with the Obligation that both Ministers and People are under, to search the Scriptures in the best Manner they can, and judge for themselves. It is a standing Maxim with me, on which all Religion, as such is built, that no Society, by what venerable Title soever distinguished, has a Right to impose a *Creed* upon another: Nor does the necessary Satisfaction of the Society pleaded for imply it. But on the contrary, supposes the *Creed* already made, and the Minister's Belief settled.

THE Satisfaction respects what the Minister's Belief is, and is far from being an Obligation upon him, to subscribe Articles of Faith, whether he believes them or not.

NOR can I conceive this Claim invades any Rights and Priviledges, that really belong to the the Ministerial Office, because the Satisfaction askt may be denied, and in Consequence the Relation of Minister to that People be refused, and the People may seek out and elect another, consistent with their own Rights, and his too. Each is Master of his own Actings, and has a Negative for himself, and no Injury done. Nor is it disputed, whether it be expedient to have a standing Ministry in the Church. It is agreeable to the
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Will of God, that proper Persons be appointed, and vested with necessary Powers, to act in all publick Ministrations of Religion. This, I admit, is evident from the Reason of the Thing, and is consonant to the Apostolical Rules.

BUT no particular Persons have a Right to the Office it self, by any special Entail, either by the Law of Nature, or by the Scripture Settlement, (but where God was pleas'd to interpose by Laws of Peculiarity) exclusive of others of proper Abilities.

IF such a Right be supposed under the Gospel Oeconomy, it is necessary it should be known who the Persons are, and their Right and Powers clearly proved, before any Claim be allow'd in Consequence of it, if not, it must be admitted a very reasonable Thing to ask, by what Authority the Person acts, to which others are necessarily obliged to submit?

IF this Right be an Inclosure, Restrain'd, and Exclusive, it is a daring Usurpation in others to act in the Pastoral Relation. Nor will the Society be at Liberty to elect any, who have not these, as yet unknown, and peculiar Characteristicks. When these Persons with their proper Signatures, and Ensigns of their Office shall appear, we may be able to judge even of your Right to the Character you sustain. Methinks, 'tis pity, the Laity should be without your Directory, in this Case, it might prevent their invading some special Rights by Charter entail'd, on a particular Set of Men, as yet unknown to us.

THIS, Sir, is an Affair of too great Consequence and Importance to the Laity, to be given up, without the clearest Proof, as we apprehend it a point of Right; and that it may subject the the Worship of God (to which we Laity think ourselves Guardians, as well as the Clergy) to be directed by such, as should overthrow the very Principles

ciples on which, we should think, all proper Religious Worship is founded. You know, Sir, it is this pretended Right, and Superiority, has involv'd the Christian Church in endless Disputes, and the same Cause will uniformly produce the same Effects.

If this be too absurd to be defended (as I believe it is in your Judgment) it must then follow, That Persons uniting in particular Societies for Religious Worship, have the sole Original Right of nominating such Persons, as after diligent Enquiry, and proper Trials, they shall judge most fit, and proper, to preside over, and Minister among them. Societies, thus formed, are independent one of another.

If this be not the Case, you might well employ your Time, Sir, to inform the worshipping Assemblies who must appoint for them.

THE natural inherent Rights of Mankind are not alter'd by the Laws of the Gospel, or Apostolical Constitutions, they are left as they were, antecedent to Revelation. There are particular Qualifications, and Rules laid down in Scripture, respecting the Office of a Minister, as a Chart for the Electors to conduct themselves by, but here the Society are the only proper Judges for themselves, unless they are to be moved by meer Mechanism, according as the External Weights shall determine.

No particular *Triers* are appointed by Divine Authority, without whose Approbation the Society are not at Liberty to chuse. However proper that Method may be for meer Order sake, yet it is a Trust reposed by the People, for their more general Satisfaction, but not in Opposition to their own Right of judging: And perhaps some of them may be found as capable of it, as the Ministers themselves. Other general Rules are to be observed respecting Order and Decency,

cy, which are at the Discretion of every particular Society.

IF Christianity has made any Alteration in the Societies natural Rights, it is necessary that should be proved by some clear, and positive Text. This would soon silence all Controversies about Church Power, and Ministerial Authority.

UNTIL this be done, I see no Reason why the Laity should be treated with Contempt, or banter'd out of their Rights, under the Notion of being *Impertinent*.

FOR my own part, I have a great Veneration and Esteem for all serious Ministers of the Gospel, and always treat them with Respect, accounting them worthy of double Honour, tho' I cannot think that there are, *Jure Divino*, Persons in Ecclesiastical Office, who have a Right to Superiority over, or to have the absolute Direction of the Faith of the Laity. Nor can I admit they should be exalted at the Expence of the Rights of the People: Or that the Character of *κληροι* belongs exclusively to them, I take the People to be a Part of God's Heritage.

IF there be any invariable Method prescribed for the People, in the Choice of their Minister, over ruling their natural Right, let it be known, and it shall be Religiously observed, until such Rules from Scripture Authority be produced, that in all Respects, and in every Circumstance, we are enjoined to pay Obedience to, we shall act according to the best Light we have, nevertheless open to Instruction, and willing to be informed; but the Method must not be Banter, but Argument.

BUT supposing, not granting, such Alterations could be proved; Pray who is judge of the proper Boundaries of them? Where will you center the Power of Final Decision in case of Dispute?

I HOPE you have not such exalted Notions of the Ministerial Authority, to suppose it is settled *solely* in the Clergy of *any* Denomination, it will surely require a better Proof, than you are able to give. Nor can you say they are less Infallible, than many that can be found among the Laity.

A LATE unhappy Difference sufficiently convinces us, that you are very fallible Judges, either of Faith, or Prudence.

NOR has any particular Person an immediate Commission from God, to act as a Minister in any particular Church. Could such an immediate Commission be produced, no doubt it would be frequently quoted, and did you know of any such Instance, I presume you would not have omitted it, to honour your Triumph over the Christian People, and by such Instance would have effectually proved what you have asserted, That *the People have no Right to be satisfied about the Faith of their Minister; in that Way and Manner they think necessary*, because such a Commission must have obliged the Society to submit, let his Faith be what it will, least they should act opposite to the supposed Commission.

NOR does Ordination by Ecclesiastical Persons, supposed to have the sole Power, give any Person a Right to Minister in *any particular Congregation*, without their Consent; because such a Power given by the Society would be sufficient, if the Ordination should be refused. And surely, the People may expect a Blessing, and humbly hope, they may serve God in an acceptable Manner, under the Want of refused Ordination; unless it can be proved that God has positively determined any one invariable Method to be observed, in order to the *Being* of a Minister. If you can prove this, you will be very kind to oblige the Church with that Directory.

I WOULD not here be understood to deny the Expediency of Ordination; no, I agree 'tis fit and proper to be done for the sake of Order, but 'tis one Thing to allow it for that End, and another to assert that it conveys a Power to administer in a particular Society without their Appointment; or to assert that a Man *cannot* be a Minister without such Ordination. The Rights of the People stand unimpeached either Way.

A's, I hope, I have evinced, they have a Right to *Chuse*, so I think they must of Consequence have a Right to *Judge*, who is most likely to fill up that Relation, and answer all the Ends of their Choice. Without this, the Rights pleaded for would be of no Service. The Ministry is to be considered as a Means to an End. If the People have a Right to the End, they have a Right to all the necessary Means leading to that End, and that inalienable.

THE Design of the Ministry is the People's Good, and consequently they must either judge for themselves, what Ministry is most proper to answer that End, or some-body must judge for them by Divine Appointment, because this Right must not be parted with without it.

It is not in the Matters of Eternal Importance, as in Civil Rights, where Persons may part with any, or all, these being absolutely in their own Power, which the Rights pleaded for are not, because of the prior indispensable Obligation they are under to God, to do the best they can to save their own Souls, and to make use of the best Means in their Power, accommodate to this End, without being determined in an Affair of this Consequence, by the judgment of Persons, equally fallible, and liable to Mistakes as themselves.

If they have a Right to judge, they have a Right to all the proper Means, by which they may form a Judgment, and are answerable for any allowed

lowed Neglect therein. The Affair is of too weighty a Nature to be taken upon Trust, nor is the Matter to be *lumpt*, however ludicrously you may think or write about it.

If such Prudential Care be not taken, the Society will have no rational Grounds to justify their Conduct. The particular Methods of Information and Satisfaction, must be left to the Society to judge of; and nothing but what appears to them Rational, and Satisfactory ought to be acquiesced in.

AND so far as I have heard of the particular Method, observed by the Dissenters, it is agreeable to this Principle.

WHAT can justify the Manner of their Ordinations, but proper Satisfaction? Have Ministers, *as such*, an Authority to oblige the Candidates, to make a public Confession of Faith, and to answer such Questions as are usually proposed on such Occasions? It is admitted none can oblige them to *assist* in the Ordination of a Person, of whose Abilities, Faith, and Conversation, they are not satisfied. And is it not equally Rational, that the Society should have Satisfaction, in these Particulars too, without incurring the Charge of acting either *Imprudent* or *Unchristian*? Or must that be construed doing a Righteous Thing, when Ministers only are concerned, and *Unrighteous* and *Unchristian*, when the People endeavour Satisfaction? This is surely too barefac'd a Complement. Good Sir, review your own Conduct, lest the observing World should retort the Charge.

GOD is to be worshipped in that Method, which is most acceptable to him, nor is any one obliged to be determined by any human Authority, to follow any particular Method, but every Man ought impartially to search the Scripture, and judge for himself; and tho' he should be single in his Opinion, when so formed on the Word of
God

God sincerely searched, he ought to act agreeable to it, otherwise he will be chargeable with vile Insincerity; consequently 'tis his Right, and should be his Care, and Concern to make Choise of such a Person, under whose Ministrations he apprehends, he may most acceptably serve his God. Nor can I conceive how a rational Choise can be made without the Satisfaction pleaded for.

It is foreign to the Question to suggest, that acceptable Worship may be paid to God, without entring into the Account of the Minister's Faith or Doctrines by him taught. Of these the Judgment is to be formed by comparing them with the Original Standard; whosoever in religious Societies, formed by Virtue of the Christian Charter, shall teach those Doctrines, which are judged on the most honest Enquiry, to be contrary to those taught in the Word of God, do in these Particulars preach a new Gospel, nor can acceptable Worship in such Particulars be paid, because it is in the Enquirer's Opinion, departing from the Rule of Worship; consequently such an one cannot rationally hope for Acceptance, as under his present Apprehensions, he would thereby rather provoke, than honour God the Object of Worship, who requires Truth in the inner Parts. Besides, this would be substituting yourself in the room of the Society to be their Dictator, whose different Sentiments are not to be over-rul'd by your Judgment, how superior soever you may apprehend it. If others differ from him, he ought not to censure or reproach them, may endeavour to inform and convince them, but leave the final Decision of their Thoughts to their own Judgment, under the awful Inspection of their Judge.

EVERY Society, and every particular Member have a Right to judge of the Laws of Christ, directing their Conduct, and of all the Doctrines of the Gospel, as Objects of Faith. And there-

fore they are of consequence to judge what Minister as a Means, or Instrument, is most likely to assist in both, and to reject him, when they find he holds, or preaches such Notions as are destructive of both; unless it can be proved that the Society ought to be unconcerned about both, and may be so without any Degree of Guilt.

THERE is surely a very wide Difference between allowing such a Minister to be a Christian, tho Erroneous, and claiming a Right to Satisfaction, whether he is proper to be received as the Minister of a particular Society. I believe you would not take upon you to declare, that a Person who believes *E. G.* Transubstantiation, or Image Worship, is no Christian: And yet, I hope, you would not condemn a Society of Christians, who should refuse such an one to be their Minister, or should endeavour to be satisfy'd, whether he did believe these Doctrines or not: If a Society ought to be justified in these Particulars, why not in others, that they apprehend to be of equal, or greater Importance in Religion? The same Reason that will justify any Enquiry at all, will justify the Society in their Enquiries about any Articles of Faith whatsoever.

THE same Right, or Authority, that will justify the Removal of a Minister, or vindicate any particular Member's withdrawing from their Minister, either when he shall teach those Things, which in their Opinion are directly contrary to Divine Revelation, or when the Irregularities of his Life shall render him unworthy of the Ministerial Character; I say, the same Reason will justify their Refusal of him at first, and vindicate their judging before as well as after the Choice. The Right and Duty is the same; nor is there more Authority necessary for the one than the other.

If

IF the Minister had an inherent Right. (the indelable Character upon him) it would not be in the Peoples Power to remove him: And I know it is not, in such Cases, where it is asserted, and by the secular Power supported and maintain'd. But the Case is different with the Dissenters. The Relation is mutual, and subsists so long, and ought no longer than as it answers the Ends of it, when they appear not answered, the Right, and Power reverts to the People; the Relation is to be dissolved, and the Society of Right *may* and *ought* to proceed to another Choice, from whence they may rationally expect better Service. Surely, if the Doctrines taught are in the Society's Opinion, after a sincere Search, inconsistent with the Christian Revelation, the steady Regards they ought to have to those important Truths, will justify their withdrawing, or not continuing their Minister. And I think the Reason much stronger, why they should be satisfied before the Choice of the Person proposed to be their Minister, because it may prevent a great many ill Consequences that may attend an after Breach.

IF Satisfaction about a Minister's Faith be not the undoubted Right of the Society, I must quit that which I always thought, and do still think a valuable Branch of my Nonconformity. Were your Notions steadily pursued, they will, in my Opinion, effectually establish the Power of a Patron's Presentation, and for ever render such inexcusable, who do not submit to it.

A Satisfaction about Articles of Faith is of infinitely greater Consequence, than about the lawfulness of meer Forms and Ceremonies.

IF Satisfaction about Articles of Faith is not *Proper*, or is an *Unrighteous Thing*, What subsisting Reason can there be to justify *any* Trial of a Minister's Abilities, before his being Elected? Without the Supposition of the People's Right to Satisfaction,

faction, the Society may take the first Offer, let the Person's Belief of Scripture Doctrines be what it will. This would be an easy Way of Procedure, and perhaps secure the designing Minister from being discovered, let his Principles be never so destructive to the Principles of Christianity. Surely, Sir, we have a further View in the Choice of a Minister, than the agreeableness of his Person, Voice, and Gesture, and are concerned for his Furniture for the Ministerial Office, and in a Principal Manner for his Notions of those Truths, which we firmly believe to be the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity. We think our selves obliged to be particularly careful on this Head of Enquiry, as we apprehend it to be of the greatest Importance to our Spiritual Improvement, and Peace. If other Societies have different Sentiments, it is no Rule for our Conduct, but we leave them to act according to their own Judgment, and Discretion.

You ask, pag. 10. *Who must have this Satisfaction?* I agree with you in the Answer, without Doubt *They, and only They, who have a Right to demand it.*

THAT this Right is in the Society, I have before proved, and if the whole have this Right, every particular Member of it has the same for himself, and if he is not satisfied, or such Satisfaction is denied him, he is at Liberty peaceably to withdraw from the Society, and place himself under a Ministry, where he may have Satisfaction; for none are obliged by the Christian Directory to join with any one particular Society for the publick Worship of God, amidst all the Varieties, and Differences of Christians; nay, it becomes their Duty not to have Church Communion, where, after an honest Examination, they apprehend the Truths of the Gospel are not taught, but on the contrary, Doctrines received, and propagated, which
are

are directly contrary to the Christian Revelation. This in its Consequence would be to divest Jesus Christ of his Authority, as Law-giver, and is a vile Prostitution of Conscience to the Judgment of others, who ought to prove their Infallibility before such a submission be admitted. A Man must first judge for himself, whether Communion with such a particular Society is either lawful, or preferable; and if he finds he cannot do this with a safe Conscience, it would be Sin in him to hold an external Communion. As the Obligation to be a Christian is the Evidence we have for the Truth of Christianity, so the Obligation to be of one particular Church is founded on the Evidence, that the Church maintains no Doctrines prejudicial to Religion, or makes no Terms of Communion, which cannot be submitted to without invading the Rights of Conscience. The meer being of this, or that particular Church is a voluntary Act. Now it does by no means appear clear to me, that the best Communion can be chosen, except by chance, if to the utmost of our Power we do not take all fitting Methods of Information and Satisfaction.

If this be not allowed, I see no need at all of Thought, or Care in the Choice of Church Communion, the Person is equally justified, whether he is of a Popish, or a Protestant Society.

If any thing short of Satisfaction about Doctrines to be taught, as well as Terms of Communion imposed, either ought, or rationally can, determine the private Judgment of an Honest Christian, truly desirous to approve himself to God, in this Particular: I would be very glad to know what it is, or how such a Conduct can be justified: I apprehend an Obligation, to make the best Choice we can of Church Communion, implies in it, a sincere Endeavour to have the Satisfaction pleaded for, and that this only can justify the Choice made,
if

if after all we should happen to be in an involuntary Mistake.

It is admitted the Society ought not to acquiesce in the Judgment of any *fallible Trier of Orthodoxy*, because this would be to be determined by Human Authority in matters of Faith, and is inconsistent with the steady and immediate Regards we ought to have to our great Lord, who is the sole King in his Church. The Society whose highest Interests are concerned, are to be Judges of their Ministers Orthodoxy for themselves. That which concerns all in the Matters of God, and Conference, ought to be approved by all, nor has any other Person, or Persons, a Right authoritatively to interpose.

It is indeed (as you say) possible, though I should with reluctance admit the Supposition, that a Minister may impose upon a People, and talk *after a System, or Catechism, or an established Article, and subscribe to all*, though he does not believe one Jota of it. In such a case the Society cannot guard against the meer possibility of being imposed upon; however they will *have Peace on Reflection*, that they did all that was in their Power, to secure a valuable Gospel Ministry, to themselves; and if after all they should be deceived, the Power asserted, and pleaded for, will justify their withdrawing from his Ministrations, and Maintenance, whereby such an hypocritical Minister, would find his Sin, in his Punishment.

In this case I no way plead, that Subscription in any kind is a sufficient Security: the Man that is to act the hypocritical Part, will not only Declare, but Subscribe, and in any Manner, to obtain the End he has in View.

NOR am I in the least concerned, to vindicate Subscription, it being no Part of the Conduct of this Society, whatever you have suggested, but the Rights of the People, to have Satisfaction about the Faith

Faith of their Minister; without being either *Imprudent*, or *Unchristian* in so doing. The Powers asserted to be in the People, is the most probable Way to obtain Satisfaction, and should it fail of Success, it will no way impeach this Principle.

NOR is your Argument of any Weight, *that because the People may be in Error, or are not Orthodox*, therefore they have no Right. Whether they are so or not, their Right is the same. They are to judge for themselves, and it is supposed, that they ground their Faith, on what appears to them to be clear Scripture Evidence, and which I apprehend, does bind their Consciences, for whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin, The Obligation is upon them, with a *Non Obstante* to all human Authority.

BUT pray Sir, who must be judge, whether the Society be in Error or no. Without informing the World in this particular, you are in my Opinion, only begging the Question, and ingrossing all Truth to your self, no doubt by Virtue of the Right, and Priviledge annexed to your Office, though this is paying your Understanding too great a Compliment. This Argument, I confess, would be unanswerable at *Rome*, upon the Principles of their Church, but not so on Protestant ones. This has ever been the Support of Tyranny, over Conscience, and the Pretence that those, who happen to be of different Sentiments in Religion, are in an Error, have always kindled the Flames in every Age of Persecution, and will never fail of depriving Mankind, of their most valuable Priviledges, if admitted.

IF the People must be deprived of this Right, upon Supposition of their being in an Error, you may as well tell them roundly, that Doctrines taught, are of no manner of concern to them, because after all it is possible they may be mistaken. I know no remedy the People have left, but this,
to

to venture your Displeasure, and to do what you call *an unrighteous*, or an *impertinent thing*. For my own part, I think, every Society of Christians, have a *Right* to chuse such a Minister, as on the strictest Trial and Examination they are satisfied will preach those Doctrines, which they apprehend are contained in the Scriptures, and of importance to the Christian.

YOUR grave Proposal P. 12. of carrying the Test through the Congregation, is merry enough, *Sir, will you subscribe? Madam will you subscribe? Sage Advice!* whether the Churches will think fit, to follow your Directory, I can't say, possibly they may think whether it be fitting or not, that they have a Right to be satisfied about their Ministers Faith. Surely there is something more necessary to Satisfaction, whether a Person is qualified to be a Minister, then to be a Communicant at the Lord's Table, or a Member of a particular Congregation, and even in *this* case the Society are to judge too, whether he is fit for their Communion, by comparing all things with their Master's Will, where the Terms of Communion are settled. If the Society should happen to be in an Error, after an honest Examination of their Bibles, with a tender Regard to the Honour of God, the Mistake is involuntary; nor is the State of the Person denied Communion, in the least alter'd by it, with respect to the Favour of God. But whatever Right, a Christian though erroneous in the Opinion of the Society, may have to the external Communion, no one has a Right to the Pastoral Relation, till the Society are satisfied of his Fitness in every Respect, and actually choose him.

YOU ask P. 12. *What is the Point in which a People ought to be satisfied, as to the Faith of their Minister?* I answer, not only about the Doctrine of the ever Blessed Trinity, in Opposition to the Arian Heresy, the present Point in publick Debate: But about every

every Doctrine in Opposition, to every apprehended Error. If they have a Right to be satisfied in *One*, they have in *any* Article of Faith.

I agree with you, that there are many other Errors of dangerous Consequence in Religion, beside the *Arian*, and the Peoples care is to extend to them all, in proportion to their apprehended Importance, and they have a Right to do so. How forcible, and evident is your Conclusion! that *because* there are other Errors of dangerous Consequence besides the *Arian*, therefore the People have no Right to be satisfied whether their Minister is an *Arian* or not, or it is *Impertinent* and *Unchristian*, to insist upon it. So that Matters are brought to a fine State, this is a lumping Bargain, I confess, in favour of Error, it may now *pass muster* without Fear of being detected.

Is it Unchristian to war against the Opposers of the Doctrine of the ever Blessed Trinity, because there are in the World *Tritheists*, and *Socinians*? or does Mr. *Reynolds*, or any one else assert, that the former ought to confine our Zeal? No Sir, the Multitude of Errors, that are broached among us should heighten our Concern, and quicken our Diligence, after Satisfaction about all Truths, and not be produced as an Argument, to be unconcerned about any one particular Error.

WELL! but you object P. 7. *Surely there may be Ways of requiring Satisfaction thought necessary by a People, that are neither just, nor Reasonable, and in which to comply with their Demands may be neither Prudent nor Christian.*

I know not that Mr. *Reynolds* has asserted any Obligation on Ministers to comply with the Demands of a People, which they shall judge neither *Prudent nor Christian*. The Conduct of Ministers, is under their own Direction, and they ought to do nothing for which their Consciences will in Time to come, reproach them for Insincerity. These are

Rights of their own which ought to be secured, and vindicated as Sacred, and may be effectually done, without any Violation of the Rights of the People. As the People have a Right to judge what is *fit* and *necessary* for their Satisfaction, so Ministers have an equal Right to judge for themselves, how far it may be *Prudent and Christian to comply*. Nor is the Preservation of these Rights inconsistent, but may be mutually preserved, unless it be supposed that any one Particular Person has a Right to the Ministerial Relation, antecedent to the Choice of the People.

WHAT if I admit, that there may be ways of requiring Satisfaction thought *fit and necessary* by a People, that are neither just nor reasonable, and in which to comply with their Demands, may be neither *Prudent, nor Christian*, how would this contradict any thing Mr. Reynolds has advanced? has he not particularly refer'd to the Conduct of the Society, *under their present Circumstances*, and asserted their Right to *act* as they have done both as Men and Christians? I shall lay the Conduct of our Society before the World to judge, whether our Requests were *just or Christian*, and Mr. Denham's Compliance prudent, or reasonable, *under our Circumstance*.

BUT how Sir, must we be determined what is fit and necessary for a People to demand? Is it not equally reasonable to suppose that a Minister may be a Humourist, and refractory, and no more a competent judge what is fit to be refused, as that a Body of People should insist on an *Unrighteous* or an *Unchristian Demand*. Or it may be in your Opinion, the Peoples judging what is *fit and necessary* is to be lodged with Persons of an *Ecclesiastical Character*. Really Sir, I have no such mean Opinion of a Society of Christians to imagine, that they would deliberately insist on an *Unrighteous Method*, nor do I know of any such Congregations: If there are, neither we, nor Mr. Reynolds from any thing that

that appears in his Preface, are concerned in their Vindication. Nothing will justify an *Unlawful, Unrighteous, or Unchristian Action*. It may be worth your Pains to set down proper Criterions by which the judgment may be formed of what is *fit and necessary*, to be demanded at all times, and under every possible Circumstance, and of what is *fit and necessary* to comply with. *A hairs Breadth*, beyond which standard it will be both *Imprudent and Unrighteous*, either for the Minister or Society to act. Herein you might do good Service, be a guide to the Churches, and abundantly prove your Superior Capacity, till this be done, be persuaded, that the People are as cautious, and as capable of judging, as Ministers are supposed to be.

THUS Sir, I have sent you my Thoughts on this Subject in the best manner, my multiplicity of Business in Life will admit, submitting my self to the Judgment of others, how far I have proved the Peoples Right to *Satisfaction, concerning the Faith of their Minister*.

I shall in what remains lay before the World, the Method by which the Society conducted themselves, in the Choice of the Reverend Mr. *Denham*, to be their Pastor.

UPON the Death of the late Reverend and Pious Mr. *Pomfret* the bereaved Society came, *inter alia*, to the following Resolution. That whosoever should become their Pastor, should before his Election give them Satisfaction, concerning his own Faith of the Doctrine of the ever Blessed Trinity.

THIS Resolution was thought necessary *under the present Circumstances of our Times*, and is founded on the Principles of Right, which I have asserted, and I hope maintained in the preceding Essay. This is what Mr. *Reynolds* in his Preface has truly represented, and I think it does equally guard against the *Tritheistical* and *Sabellian*, as well as the *Arian* Scheme, tho' the latter is par-

ticularly mentioned, as being the Subject of the late Debates, in a more special Manner, than any of the other Errors. Nor can I conceive the Force of your Remarks, *Pag. 13.* suggesting, that to avoid the one Heresy, we necessarily fall into another. The Antecedent is the *Belief of the ever Blessed Trinity*, the Relative is Heresy, in every Branch, opposite to that Belief, and the *Arian* Heresy in particular, as the Error of the present Day. The silly People you endeavour to expose understand it thus.

THE Character of the Reverend Mr. Denham, having been agreeably recommended to some of our Number, he was desired to preach to the Society, when he took Occasion in a very free, open, and explicate Manner, to declare his Sentiments of the Doctrine of the Trinity, in his own Terms. The Apprehensions the Society have of that Doctrine Sir, are founded on *Scripture Evidence*, and not *barely human Authority*. This may serve as an Answer to your Queries, *Pag. 11.* We are not concerned what your Judgment of us is, whether we are *Right and Sound Believers or not*: Because we think we have an equal Right to sit as Judges on your Orthodoxy, as you may claim on ours. He who judgeth us is the Lord, to whom in Sincerity we appeal, that we desire both to know, and do his Will.

THO' this publick Declaration in a full Assembly was generally approved of, insomuch as it was apprehended, no further Difficulty would be started on that Head of Enquiry; yet to our great Surprize at our next Church Meeting it was suggested, that either Mr. Denham was an *Arian*, or a Favourer of that Scheme, and some anonymous Letters were produced to support it. I think it expedient to mention this, because *Pag. 8.* you dare say there was no Charge exhibited against him, as to his Faith, and thence argue the Impertinence of clapping

ping the Test upon him. Whatever you *dare say*, this was the Accident that obliged us to pursue the Method we did. This Incident impressed the Minds of many with jealous Thoughts, and had an apparent Tendency to interrupt our Harmony, which was laboured to be preserved by some of us, who knew and feared the dismal Consequence, and the Difficulty of settling and maintaining a good Decorum in so large a Society, under their present melancholy Circumstances.

AND are we, Sir, to be arraigned, and condemned for essaying every lawful Method to reconcile the different Interests? Or are we to be deterred from the Attempt, because it has not your Sanction? We had not gone into those Measures, had not this Accident happened, or had we not apprehended it a Remedy adapted to the Evil feared. If we must not have followed the Dictates of our own Judgment, to whom must we have submitted our Conduct? It seems to be but one Remove from Heresy to ask Advice of Mr. Reynolds; and what if some should have as mean Opinion of yours? But to be plain, we followed neither, but our own, as we think we had a Right to do both as *Men and Christians*.

MANY sad Examples we had before us of Breaches in Neighbouring Churches, on the Choice of a Minister, to excite our greatest Care to prevent the same Mischief: And I believe you are not insensible it may happen in a Prudent, Polite, and Knowing Society of *Right and Sound Believers*. No wonder then a silly People should be in Difficulty on this Account.

VARIOUS Methods of Healing were propos'd, and this at length was concluded to be most expedient *under our present Circumstances*, that a Letter should be sent to Mr. Denham, sign'd by some of the Society, to which he should be desired to send his

his speedy Answer, which at a proper Time should be communicated to the whole.

AT the Request of my Brethren, I drew up the Form of a Letter, that was sign'd by several of us, in which we requested Mr. *Denham* would communicate to us in Writing, in explicit Terms, his Sentiments of the Doctrine of the Trinity, as also his Apprehensions of the Obligation on Ministers, when publicly, and in proper Manner called there-to, to subscribe the same.

TO this Letter, Mr. *Denham* sent us his Answer, wherein after an Appeal to his public Ministrations, and Subscription on the public Records, he gives us his Sentiments of the Doctrine of the Trinity in *Terms clear, strong and unexceptionable*, and declared his Readiness at all Times, when in a proper manner called thereunto, to subscribe his Belief of, and Adherence to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

AND is there any thing in Mr. *Reynolds's* Account disagreeing with this Conduct, that you so freely impeach his Veracity? Or is there any thing in it, that deserves the hard, severe Charge of *Imprudent Unchristian and Unrighteous*, that you so unmercifully fall upon the Society: Or can seeming Constructions, and giddy Suppositions with the subsequent Conduct give you *Peace on Reflection*? Or is your Example in the Liberties you have taken, worthy Imitation? Let the World judge. It may possibly give you a *Reputation to the latest Posterity*, but I fear not to the Advantage of your Character, or Station in Life.

I MAY appeal to all the separate Congregations in this City, even those under the Care of Non-subscribing Ministers, whether they have not done as much (the meer Formality of giving under their Hands by Letter excepted) and of equal Validity for the Satisfaction of their respective Congregations. Have they not all, or the greater Num-

Number of them declared from the Pulpit their Sentiments of the Doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity. And does not the Circumstance of Time plainly evince, that this was done for the Satisfaction of the Society, to which they were related? Why all this Clamour then against us? Perhaps in your Opinion this was a *Work of Supererogation*, and a piece of Drudgery, which for divers good Causes and Considerations them thereunto moving, they thought fit and necessary to be done. No Noise at all made of any *Unchristian or Unrighteous Demand*. Were the People in this Case *impertinent or pragmatical or wiser than their Teachers*? I trow not. If there was no Right in the People to Satisfaction, how comes it to pass that the Request must be indulged? Can you foresee all the Train of terrible Consequences, that such a Compliance may lead to, and end in? Is it not to be feared, that the People may make more Demands, to the *Infringment of your Christian Liberty*? And ought you not to have observed the Rule *Principiis obsta*, and crushed such a spreading Evil in the Buddings thereof? But I fancy you *like*, and by your Conduct *approve* this Method of Satisfaction, and therefore no one must dare, on pain of your highest Displeasure, to contradict it, tho' other Methods equally good are *Unchristian and Unrighteous*.

At the Meeting of the Church appointed for the Choice, Mr. *Denham's* Letter was read, in order to antidote the Poison with which many of our Members were infected, and it had the desired Effect, we came to an amicable Choice, contrary, I believe, to the Expectation of those, who best knew our Confusions, inasmuch, that even such as opposed, did with great Chearfulness join in the Letter of Invitation. When some other once flourishing Churches are either decayed, or quite dissolved, we are now happy in an acceptable useful Minister, and enjoy Truth with her Brother-ly

ly Love. However *impertinent* or *unrighteous* our Conduct has been in your Opinion, with Pleasure we review it, and rejoice in our Settlement.

THUS, Sir, is naked Fact without the least colouring or Art, neither the People nor their Minister is at all misrepresented.

Mr. Reynolds has told the World in his Preface, that Mr. Denham did declare from the Pulpit, and had given under his Hand his Sentiments of the Doctrine of the Trinity in full and unexceptionable Terms. He has done this, it is naked Fact, and I dare say would not scruple doing the same Thing again and again, under the same Circumstances; or should any serious Person write to him for his Sentiments on the Doctrine of the Trinity, or any other Article of Faith, I believe he would not scruple a Reply.

How far you in your greater Wisdom would think such a Letter *Impertinent* or *Unrighteous*, or an Answer to it a *Work of Supererogation*, I know not. It seems probable (if you continue in the same Mood you were in, when you write your Letter) that the Enquiry would be rejected with Contempt, and treated with an Air of Resentment, least your Name at the bottom of a Letter should immediately be advanced into a Charge of your being a Subscriber, which, as far as I know, from what you have writ, in your Letter before me, may be as dangerous a Heresy as either Arianism, or Sabellianism.

But where, Sir, has Mr. Reynolds said, that Mr. Denham signed the Roll, that you make all this Rout about it, if he has, Mr. Reynolds is false in Fact; if not, 'tis a meer Conjecture of your own, and the frightful Image of your heated Imagination, a meer *Piece of Quixotism*, and I would recommend it to your cooler Thoughts, if you are ever cool on this Subject, how you can justify publishing to the World, with so much Assurance, such a Heap

of

of Suppositions, and Constructions, as real Fact? Observing this to a particular Friend of yours and mine, Mr. S. M. and shewing him the Passage, he was astonished at it, the Evidence of the Charge flasht in his Face, as he read it; but after a Pause, gravely said, he would consult you upon it, and on Return, declares himself convinced it is not so, for he has your Word for it, *αὐτὸς ἐπὶ, viz.* That you assert *nothing at all, there is nothing in it, you only spoke ironically, you knew it was not true, it was only a little Banter, you had a mind to be merry, that's all.* Strange Reply! You acknowledge there was no Truth in it, and yet the World must be led into an Opinion, that it was strictly so, and the Impressions made on the Reader's Mind, must be guarded with your venerable Name in Front and Rear.

I HOPE, Sir, you will never forgive your self, and in Justice to Truth contradict an old Proverb, *Raro invenies penitentem Clericum.* Whenever you appear again from the Press, it will be very kind in you to fix an Asterisk to such Places, where you are in Earnest, that weak People be not ensnared, and mistake your Meaning, or else be allowed to believe you are always in Jest.

To conclude, as on the one Hand we shall not value your Charge of being *Pragmatical, Impertinent, or Unrighteous*, or your Censure of being *wiser than our Teachers*, when we endeavour after *Satisfaction* in Matters of Faith; so neither shall we insist upon any Thing, that we are convinced is unreasonable, or impose any real Hardship on our Minister, to destroy his Peace, Comfort, and Usefulness among us; nor have we Reason to doubt of his ready Concurrence with every Thing, he shall judge fit to be done for our Peace and Edification, consistent with the Rights of his own Conscience; and in this Method we promise our

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selves

selves, thro' the Blessing of God mutual Comfort.

THE deep Concern, which I desire always to maintain in my Mind for the Interest of Religion, obliges me to wish *in the Bowels of Jesus* (how much soever you may think it becoming your Character to ridicule that Expression, or to load Mr. *Reynolds's* Name with Contempt for using it) that some healing Methods might be found out to cure our unhappy Divisions, and to subdue, and for ever banish that unchristian Spirit, which has with so much Fury raged amongst us. Will the Time never come, when the Ministers of the Gospel of Peace will as one Man agree to hold the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, to unite against the common Enemies of the Christian Name, its Interests, and Honour? Shall the Dwellings of *Zion* always be laid waste? Shall the rich Talents of the Leaders of the Flocks be employed to their Reproach, that ought to be sacredly devoted to their solemn Work? When will the unnatural Resentments, and reproachful Contests end? Is the Wound incurable? Is there no Remedy? Can no Terms of Reconciliation be proposed? Oh the Chariots of *Israel*, and the Horsemen thereof! Where is the Lord God of *Elijah*? If you cannot agree in one *prudential Method of Satisfaction*, which surely might be done, if your Passions did subside, agree to promote the common Good of your People, and to provoke one another to Love and good Works. This will effectually undermine the Expectations of those, who wait for, and would greatly rejoice at your Halting, and sensibly relieve, and dissipate the just Fears of those, who wish well to the Cause of Christianity. How happily would the present Controversy end, if each, with united Zeal, and peace-

peaceful Conduct would assert and maintain the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and all Names of angry Distinctions cease, and be swallowed up in the Love of Truth, and one another.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your very humble Servant.



POSTSCRIPT.

THE preceding Sheets were long since writ, and lay dormant, and might for ever have remained so, had they not been awakened into Light, by the Appearance of your second Edition with a *Postscript*, wherein instead of softning what you before sent into the World, and acknowledging some Exceedings, you justify the whole both as to the Matter and Manner of it.

METHINKS by this time you might have been convinced of your Wrath, and Warmth; sure I am that within the compass of my Acquaintance, it has been generally, and very justly animadverted upon, with Censure and Concern, as what had a visible Tendency, not to extinguish, as might be wished, but to blow the Flame, and perpetuate the Jealousies and Distances, which have cramped and weaken'd our common Interest. And give me leave to ask you Sir, will it in the Opinion of the serious Part of Mankind, silence the Complaint, to lead your Readers into an Opinion that *This is the Result of Judgment?* How far this Conduct will give Weight to your Judgment, the impartial Readers will determine. I heartily wish it

had lain buried, till all the fiery Particles of the Composition had fled off: and that your peaceable Inclinations had over-rul'd your Resolution of sending them to the Press. This might have prevented these Sheets appearing in public, and the just Reflections herein contained.

THERE are two Things which properly fall within the Design of this Essay to take Notice of, referr'd to in your *Postscript*, and to examine what you have pleaded, in answer to the Charge of *Falseness in Facts*, and *Fallacy in Arguings*. To the Charge of *Falseness in Facts*, you answer in the *P. S.* *That you are conscious of no wilful Falsification, and that you have made it your Endeavour to be well and truly informed in whatever you have written upon Report of others.*

WHAT these Endeavours taken to be truly informed are, I know not, but I think it might have been expected, that a Person of much lower Degrees of Understanding, would have taken a Method of Information of what was done, and what Mr. Reynolds really intended in his Narrative, if it appeared of doubtful Signification, that is very obvious; I mean, that a Letter to Mr. Reynolds on the Subject would have set you right, and left no remaining Doubt, nor Room for random Suppositions, as real Facts. This Method surely would not have been *imprudent, unchristian, or unrighteous*: Tho', I confess, it is not clear to me, that you would not have thought it a *Work of Supererogation*, or an Instance of your great Condescension. This might have saved you much unnecessary Trouble, and prevented the Severity of your Charge on your Brother, supposing that the manner of his Expression admitted a double Construction.

I AM really at a Loss to reconcile what you now plead in your Justification with your Declaration to your good Friend Mr. M. You told him,

him, *You knew there was no Truth in it, i. e. that Mr. Denham subscribed the Roll, consequently Mr. Reynolds's Expression, That Mr. Denham had declared his Sentiment of the Doctrine of the Trinity under his Hand, was not of doubtful Signification to you. This you knew, tho' you were not so kind to let the World know it, nor omit the keen Reflection on Mr. Reynolds, founded on the Supposition of his asserting, or seeming to assert, that the Roll was subscribed, as a Test of Orthodoxy. Whence all this Freedom? Why so many Pages to debate and expose an Impertinence, which you knew had no Foundation, but in your own Construction? However you may think to shelter yourself under the Words, I suppose, I am apt to think, I am not clear, &c. I leave the World to judge what Room there was for you, even to suppose a Fact, that you knew was not asserted by Mr. Reynolds, and that really never was. If Mr. Reynolds's Account would bear the Construction you put upon it, as well as what he really intended, and was done, might you not with as much Ease and Honour, since you knew the Roll was not subscribed, have undeceived those, who had mistaken the Sense of the Phrase (if there were any such) as to have confirmed them in a Mistake, who could not imagine, that you were only talking upon it in a Banter.*

BUT to do Mr. Reynolds Justice, let us try what Weight there is in your *Marginal Hint*, pag. 25. Second Edition. *A Man in common Speech may be said to say, what he does not expressly assert, if his Words are apt, and seem designed to convey such a Meaning.*

IF by *Seem designed to convey such a Meaning* you would suggest Mr. Reynolds design'd, that the World should think, that Mr. Denham had subscribed the Roll, you surely take too much upon you, to pass such a Censure, and impeach your Brother's Veracity, on such a Supposition, as im-

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plies your Knowledge of his secret Thoughts. Is it just to lead your Readers into an Opinion, that this was Mr. Reynolds's Meaning, and then to charge *Falshood in Fact* upon him? Or is it becoming your Character to suppose he design'd to convey a Lie, and to call it, as it would be, if it was so designed, *real and gross Calumny*? I hope you will ask Pardon of God, and that you will do it of your injured Brother for this Conduct. I take upon me to assure the World, that he had no such Meaning, and that by Mr. Denham's giving it under his Hand, he designed only to convey, that he had declared his Sentiments of the Doctrine of the Trinity under his Hand in a Letter, which was communicated to, and satisfied the *Body of the People*.

If you mean that Mr. Reynolds's Words are apt, abstracted from his Design to convey such a Meaning, that Mr. Denham had set his Hand to the Salters-Hall Roll. Is he answerable for the Mistakes of an unwary Reader? Or is the Consequence necessary, that because some have misunderstood him, therefore the Words are apt of themselves to convey such a Meaning? By no means. May not the Mistake arise from a too superficial Reading? But in order to judge aright in this Matter, let us compare the several Parts of this Narrative together. I cannot find, that throughout all that Part, which respects either the Conduct of the Society, or Mr. Denham's Compliance, that the Roll is so much as once mentioned, which Omission can scarce be accounted for, if the Historian had had it in his View: Besides, why should Mr. Reynolds insert Mr. Denham's Readiness at all times, when in a proper Manner called thereto to subscribe, if he had now done it: Will it not rather admit of this Construction, that Mr. Denham did not now think himself called thereto in a proper manner, and therefore did not subscribe, but
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would do it when in a proper Manner called thereto he being judge? Beside, I apprehend your Construction is subverting the natural and known use of the Words. Whoever till now imagined, that when a Person gave his Sentiments of the Doctrine of the Trinity under his Hand, that it was meant *he subscribed the Roll* at Salters-Hall. If you have declared your Sentiment of that Doctrine under your Hand to any Person, you are from that Instant a Subscriber of *the Roll* by the same Rule, supposing you are in the same Opinion.

I HAVE COMPARED P. 8 and 25 together, in Order to find out proper Conviction, to alter my Opinion of your asserting, that Mr. Denham had *subscribed the Roll*, without any manner of Authority from the Preface, but must own my self very much disappointed. In the first of these Pages we meet with this Passage, *Were these Terms those of the Articles, and Answers?* This had been told, *I am apt to think plainly, that is in express Terms, had it been matter of Fact.* This Period is introduced with one of the Terms of Art, frequently occurring in your Letter, *I am apt to think*, and as much implies a Doubt, as when you use another of them in the latter Page, *I suppose*, and in both, your attempt is to reduce Mr. Reynolds to an Absurdity. In the first to an Absurdity in Conduct, in the Second to an Absurdity in Arguing. Have you asserted any thing in P. 8. or in any Part of the following one, where the Supposition is carried on, and reason'd from? Or would the Reader be induced to make any other Conclusion then your own? Viz. *A man I perceive will pass Muster then, though he do not sign the Roll, if he will do what is of equal Validity.* It is an Inference drawn from the meer Possibility only, that the *Roll* was not subscribed, and can't by any Rule of Construction, possible be brought to support any Thing more, as is abundantly

abundantly evident from P. 9. to which the Reader is refer'd.

HAD YOU positively told the World, that the *Roll* was not *subscribed*, and that Mr. *Reynolds* had amused the Reader by his Manner of Expression, giving it under his Hand, it had been just to appeal to it for your meaning; but I am at a Loss to find out a Reason why the meer Supposition P. 8. should be called in aid, to explain the Other, because the Latter may with as much justice be produced to explain the Former, the Readers being equally perplexed, there being no Key to the Cypher.

BUT IN P. 25. you carry matters much farther, and therefore gives it a much fairer Claim to be explanatory of your meaning. There you hope, that Mr. *Reynolds's* Relation will not prove real and gross Calumny. His Relation of what? Why that Mr. *Denham* has *subscribed the Roll*. It must refer to Subscribing, else it was not possible it could have this Issue, and your Hope must be needless and vain, and serve only to beget a Suspicion of your Brothers Veracity.

IN THIS PAGE you go on in an Account of that Affair, in a Manner very extraordinary. Your Intention seems to be to river the Belief thereof on your Reader by all possible means, and to guard against the Charge of *Falsehood in Fact*, by sheltering your self under *I am not clear, I am apt to think, If's and Supposes, and out of all Doubt*, and the like. But it will puzzle all your Logick, I think, to form any tollerable Reply to this Charge. You would have it here believed you quoted Mr. *Reynolds*, though his words would bear no such Construction, your self being judge. In the same Page you proceed in a Gradation. *The People in a Body, not any particular Person, did demand what you say their Minister has done, and he no doubt has done all that they demanded*, you then move a Step further, and lead your Reader, as it were by the Hand, into the Chambers of Imagery.

gery. *The Body of that People were not satisfied*, and then comes in an Assertion purely your own. *They required he should sign your Roll, and with this Demand, he readily complied.* And as if you were Conscious to your self of the apparent Deceit, and that your bare Word might be questioned, you proceed to the last and boldest Step, and make a solemn Averment upon it in the strongest Terms. This is all naked Fact without the least coloring or Art: Neither the People, nor their Minister are at all misrepresented. Strange Expressions! when you knew there was nothing in it, the People did never require it, Mr. *Reynolds* has not said it, Mr. *Denham* has not done it, nor so much as seen the *Roll* to this Day.

IF in all this you have been in Jest, I really think it is with an edg'd Tool. When you had the Character of your Brother before you, you ought to have kept the Jest to fill up a Season of private Diversion, least it should become a Part of the Song of the Drunkard.

THESE Sir, are the Reasons to support, what I have said on the Charge of Falshood in Facts in this Essay, which appears in my Apprehension, to a Demonstration; and I think will do so to every intelligent Person, that reads with Attention. I have herein endeavoured to vindicate the Veracity of Mr. *Reynolds*, and do him publick Justice, as to his Character. And if at any time I shall see Occasion, and find Ground for it, I shall as chearfully honour yours. It having been always my known Principle, and Practice, to support and vindicate an injured Reputation.

THE second thing I would observe, referr'd to in your Postscript is, *Fallacy in Arguings to overthrow the Rights of the People to the Satisfaction* pleaded for.

IN the first Edition of your Letter, the Argument stood thus. *But in all Reason they can have no Right to demand Satisfaction, who have no Capacity to receive*

it, that is that a Minister is Orthodox, so you explain it. In your second Edition it is added to confirm and strengthen the Argument, P. 10. *And such Capacity they manifestly want, who do not know what is Orthodox Belief in the Point, concerning which Satisfaction is demanded, nor can distinguish between Truth and Error, or right Apprehension and wrong. Every one therefore, before he can have a Right to demand this Satisfaction, must himself be a right Believer, that is, he must have a right Understanding of the Doctrine, know the Grounds on which he believes it, and be able to distinguish between Truth and Error.*

THESE Sir, are all general Terms to throw a Mist before the Readers Eyes, and leave him to fix what Ideas he pleases to them, and will suit every Patron of Tyranny, and Ecclesiastical Authority in all Places, and in every Age, who, under the awful Pretence, that Persons of different Sentiments in Religion, *manifestly want a Capacity to know what is Orthodox Belief, or to distinguish between Truth and Error,* will deny the Right to Satisfaction. All the absurd Superstitions of the Church of Rome, on this Pretence, are not to be refused by the poor People, *nor have they any Right to be satisfied either as Men or as Christians,* about the lawfulness of Submission to their peculiar Fopperies, because *they Manifestly want a Capacity to know what is Orthodox Belief in these Points, nor can in these Particulars distinguish between Truth and Error.* This Scheme may indeed secure a blind Submission, and lead the World into the highest Degrees of Stupidity and Ignorance; and if to this Principle we annex the Power of the Inquisition, no doubt it will have a natural Tendency to enlarge the Capacity of the People, so far, at least, as may in Fact oblige them to comply, as what is fit and proper, only, to secure them from such armed Authority; but methinks it will look very awkward to adopt it into, and make it a Part of a Protestant

Protestant System of Canons. Forgive me, Sir, if I ask you one Question, because from any Thing you have here said, *I am not clear in it*, who are the Persons, who do not know what is Orthodox Belief, or who cannot distinguish between Truth and Error? Are there any or none *who have a right Understanding of the Doctrines of the Gospel, know the Grounds on which they believe them, and are able to distinguish between Truth and Error*. If this is to be the present Criterion, and such a manifest Truth, it will not be difficult to point out the Men of this Capacity; otherwise the Christian People, will be equally at a Loss now as before, about this Right to Satisfaction, unless you think you are all this time speaking to a Company of Idiots, who will be Satisfied with this general Account. *They have no Capacity to receive it, that a Minister is Orthodox, who have no Capacity.*

WHATEVER Capacities any have, they are to be used in the best Manner they can, and were given them by God to guide them, and to judge of his Will contained in the Scriptures. If this is not true, it will be necessary to look after, and settle on one whose Capacities are large enough to determine in all Cases; till this Choice is made, and the Person enthroned, it will be much more decent and becoming a Christian, and Protestant Divine to allow, that every Man has a Right to demand Satisfaction, who has made a sincere use of his Capacity, in settling his Belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel.

THE Rights of the People have no necessary Connection with Truth, unless they are allowed to judge what is Truth; but on this Supposition, your Argument loses all its Force. It will then follow, that whatever the People shall judge to be Truth, after an honest Examination, according to the best of their Capacities, they have a Right to

be satisfied about it, but this is neither *Prudent* nor *Christian* according to your Principle.

If *this Right to Satisfaction* is necessarily connected with, and must be limited by Truth, or that no one has a *Right to Satisfaction*, but those only, whose Ideas actually agree with the Original Meaning, and Intention of the Revealer, or as you express it, *are right Believers*, I fear we shall be involved in the same Difficulty as before, to determine, *who those right Believers are*, because it is very evident, that Persons of all Denominations claim to themselves this *Capacity* and Privilege, only with this Difference in Expression, some say *they are infallible, and cannot err*, others *that they are always in the right, and never do err*, and with this Pretence engross all Right to Satisfaction to themselves, and injuriously deny it to all others, who may happen to disagree with their received Notions, or can't think as they do.

WHAT if you and I should lay our Heads together, and try the Force of this Argument to justify our Reformation from Popery. Will not a Papist assert with as much Assurance, as you can be Master of, that the Protestant is not *capable to receive Satisfaction* concerning the Orthodoxy of the Church, in the Points disputed? What Answer on your general Principle shall be given? It surely will be nothing to the Purpose to reply, that the Protestant is a *right Believer*: because this will amount to no more than your Yea, and his Nay; nor will it satisfy him to assert, that the latter *knows what is Orthodox Belief, and can distinguish between Truth and Error*, in the controverted Points, and therefore has a Right to Satisfaction; for the Absurdity will be the same as before: nor do I see how, from any thing you have said, this Circulation can be stopt.

It requires, Sir, something more than a Set of general Terms, or your meer Assertion to support
this

this Proposition. *That every one, before he can have a Right to demand Satisfaction, must himself be a right Believer:* For as the Acceptableness of our Faith does not absolutely depend on the actual Agreement of our Ideas, with the Intention of the Revealer, because then no Error at all will be excused, or it will be incumbent to show what these excusable Errors are; so the Person, acting in Sincerity, yet mistaken, has a Right to conduct himself according to his best Capacity, still submitting himself to further Light, and Evidence. I can find no Medium between the Right of every Man's judging of the Doctrines of the Gospel, and of conducting himself accordingly, and the Obligation of submitting to the Authority and Determinations of others. All the Doctrines of the Christian Revelation are propos'd to all alike, and are to be examined and assented to in Proportion to the apprehended Degree of Evidence, taking in all proper Assistances to underderstand them aright, whatever Impressions there are on the Judgment concerning these Doctrines, it is admitted, it makes no manner of alteration in the Nature of Things, nor possibly can do so, yet the Judgment thus inform'd, will support the Person's Right to act agreeable thereto. It is allowed to be of the utmost Importance to use our best Endeavours to judge aright, but in case of an involuntary Mistake, the Society have the same natural Rights as others, who may think otherwise; nor can I think it reconcileable with the Notions we have of God, that an honest, tho' erroneous Christian shall be condemned for refusing Communion with that Church or Minister, where the Doctrines of the Gospel does not appear to him to be taught, whatever his Capacities are supposed to be.

ARE not all the Controversies among the several Denominations of Christians an Appeal to the Capacities, whether supposed to be inferior or superior,

perior, and to the private Judgment of others? What else is the Debate between the Gentlemen of the Orthodox and *Arian* Scheme? Are they not all calculated to convince and satisfy the World, of the Truth and Reasonableness of their respective Sentiments? Now to what Purpose has this, or any other Doctrine been debated, if when Persons are convinced, that either the one or the other is Scriptural, and of Importance to Religion, they have no Right to be satisfied, whether these shall be preached and inculcated as the Truths of revealed Religion.

THUS, Sir, I have considered the Additional Reasonings of your Second Edition, as referr'd to in your *Postscript*, and shall think my self obliged to examine any Thing material, which you shall think fit to reply, or own my Conviction: but if you shall judge it worth your while to Remark on the supposed *Impertinence* of the Conduct of the Society, I shall not trouble my self or the World with any further Notice of it. Facts are as they are, and can't be otherwise, and therefore shall refer them to the Reflections and Judgment of others.

F I N I S.

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